The auction of the Andhra Pradesh crop of the 2001-02 season has commenced recently and so far, the prices have been remunerative.

(b) and (c) Government, through the Tobacco Board, protects the interests of the farmers through measures such as attempts to maintain demand-supply balance by regulation of production, sale of tobacco through auction platforms and assistance in identifying export markets.

Licence fees for setting up of OBUs

521. SHRI P.N. SIVA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India has favoured a one-time imposition of licence fee for setting up of Off-shore Banking Units (OBU) by commercial Banks;

(b) if so, the present system adopted in this regard;

(c) the extent to which the one-time levy of fee for OBUs would streamline the matters;

(d) whether Banks have agreed to this new system; and

(e) if not, the alternatives proposed by the Reserve Bank of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (e) At present setting up of off-shore Banking Units (OBUs) in India by commercial Banks is not permitted. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that it is examining the various issues concerning setting up of OBUs in India and a decision in this regard is yet to be taken.

Fraudulent practices in sale/purchase of shares

†522. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any case of fraud regarding sale and purchase of shares by S.C.L. with the nexus of foreign companies, has come to light;

(b) if so, the number of other such companies involved in this fraudulent activity;

(c) the action taken by Government against the officers involved in this fraud; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Contravention of Customs Act by DPC

523. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Dhabhol Power Company (DPC) has reportedly shifted certain imported critical components from its Guhagar Plant, which were extended a concessional rate of Customs Duty;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government against DPC to confiscate these components as the same is in contravention of Section 111(0) of Customs Act; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) On being asked to explain, DPC have stated, *vide* letter dated 28.1.2002, that certain components were removed from the project site for security reasons and that all these components are presently lying in their custody. A writ petition was filed by them in this regard in the Bombay High Court and in pursuance of the directions of the hon'ble Court, the said components were produced before it on 24.1.2002. DPC has also clarified that the components would be used in the power project whenever it resumes operation.

The reply given by DPC is being examined by the jurisdictional Customs authorities for taking appropriate action.

Cut down on subsidies

524. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Finance had requested the Ministry of Civil Aviation to cut down the subsidy on Haj Pilgrimage this year; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the response of the Ministry of Civil Aviation in this regard?